

## School Board Orders Continued Military Testing

New policy allows for limited privacy by individual refusal only.

The Center's Alternative to the Military project (AMP) recently won a victory with the Memphis City School boards, convincing them to make changes in how the military aptitude test (ASVAB) is administered in Memphis city schools. The changes were not easily obtained, nor do they meet our full expectations. But they do show progress.

In September we sent an email to the school board staff questioning methods of administering the military's aptitude test, known as "ASVAB" (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). We listed a number of "objectionable features," including:

- A great majority the students who unwittingly provide private information to military recruiters are under-age (17 or younger).
- Students are not being informed that by taking the ASVAB test they could receive multiple recruiting contacts.
- Parents of the minor children are not required to give their permission.

Over the next four and one-half months we held meetings with the staff's ASVAB coordinator Dr. John Barker and others to discuss our concerns and possible solutions. Our push was to inaugurate a district wide use of the test's privacy trigger, known as "Option 8." Selecting Option 8 guarantees that the test scores and other personal information will be withheld from military recruiters. We also made several appearances before the school board.

On January 22, School Board Commissioner Dr. Jeff Warren offered a resolution to adopt district wide Option 8 testing. Two weeks later, on the day of the planned vote, a phalanx of soldiers dressed in battle fatigues marched into the school board auditorium, some having been flown in from distant cities. Their leader, J.B. Smiley, warned the board against voting for Option 8. "Option 8 would deny students access to the career and education options offered by the military." The resolution was placed on hold, while Dr. Barker was sent to the east coast to investigate alternatives.

We held high hopes for his findings, with good reason. That week, we'd learned that a large Maryland school district had inaugurated the Option 8 method in their 25 high schools. Phone calls made to their guidance counselors indicated the new system to be working fine.

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## Notes from the Chair

Ask any Memphis resident what the city's biggest problem is and just about anyone will say "crime." Our crime rate is known to all. The murder rate is second in the nation only to Detroit. Many have been touched personally. Last summer in Cooper Young two men were shot and seriously injured. One was defending the register where he worked at the local mini market. He too was armed. "I'm not afraid of anybody," he once told me as he was leaving for work. Later, when he saw the gunman enter the store, pistol drawn, my neighbor drew his own weapon and instantly took a bullet in the head. Luckily it missed his brain and two days later he was back at work. The other neighbor was minding his own business in front of his house when the robbers, dissatisfied with their victim's inability to cough up the cash, shot and nearly killed him.

What does this have to do with the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center? Plenty. Any activist group such as ours is duty bound to address the cause of so much damage. A society that loses its civility to the point where a person would kill for a few tokens of crack is a society in trouble. Yet here we are. This raises two questions: how are we addressing this crisis, if at all? If we are, how can we convince our frightened constituents we're doing the right things?

To many, the connection may not be clear. Unlike the police who beef up neighborhood patrols, we address the long term, also known as the root cause. Few would argue that poverty plays an important role in fostering crime. If you have a family to feed without money, what are you going to do? Our "Food Not Bombs," program gives some help, but more than the food it shows people that others care. With our "Living Wage Campaign" we demand consideration for the poor. It's not that much money, but it could be enough to keep a mortgage paid or a utility bill. And there are more valuable commodities to be gained.

Then there's militarism. According to my dictionary: "Predominance of the military in the administration or policy of the state." We inform people with our school board appearances and sidewalk leafleting and pickets that Memphis schools are being used as a military recruiting ground. We say schools have no right to provide a place for organized violence in our education system. Too often what we hear back is double talk. And so we hold up mirrors so leaders can see their own faces as they justify what's unjustifiable.

My neighbor can be forgiven for his belief that packing a gun was the responsible thing to do. Ever since he turned old enough to turn on the television he's been taught the American way. He later learned it in school. As a practical matter, the question as to whether a man who had already drawn can be outdrawn was probably pushed to one side. Real men don't ask such questions.

The same goes for citizens who say "hire more cops" and "throw away the

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Peace and Justice Radio  
is Back!

The weekend of February 12 shook the ground beneath mainstream media in Memphis. More than 3,500 media activists from around the world gathered at the National Conference on Media Reform to challenge corporate media. This was undoubtedly a first step in bringing more independent views to Memphis Media. In the Conference's closing keynote address, Van Jones asked people if they were prepared to succeed in the media and democracy movement.

"Can we write that story?" he asked. "We have to begin to say what is our agenda and is our agenda inclusive enough? Will it lift up enough people?"

We are happy to announce that the Center is ready to start writing that story and has been awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Paul Robeson Fund for Independent Media to relaunch Peace and Justice Radio and begin the process of establishing a new community media initiative.

As an hour-long news/talk show, we will inform the community of local health, environmental, peace, justice and public policy issues. Our emphasis will give a voice to local grassroots organizations and individuals, and issues marginalized by mainstream media outlets. Information on public policy initiatives, conversations with officials and grassroots organizations will offer greater coverage to the concerns of the community. National media consolidation has pushed out

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## Mid-South Peace and Justice Center 1982-2007

25 years of working for peace and social justice!

*On January 11, 2007 the Center celebrated its 25th Anniversary at Bridges, Inc. Over 400 of our peace family came out to celebrate with us, enjoy the music of Andy Cohen, and the words of Dr. Luther Ivory and Amy Goodman.*



Over 25 years ago, we had a dream to create an interfaith center that would spread the message of peace through active nonviolence in the spirit of Jesus, M.K. Gandhi and M.L. King. We were united in our belief that through education, legislation and nonviolent direct action this goal could be achieved.

In 1981, the Cold War was full-blown, nuclear weapons were poised and ready for use, Trident submarines were being built and launched, the Berlin Wall divided one part of the world from the other, Apartheid was reeking havoc in South Africa and the “White Trains” were carrying weapons of mass destruction through Memphis and across the country.

In Central American the Nicaraguan War was raging with the US supporting the Contras. People were being massacred in El Salvador and Honduras. In Memphis, local banks had discriminating lending practices, and environmental degradation plagued low-income areas of our city.

Our Peace and Justice Center was born out of the need to speak and act with a strong voice declaring that what was happening in our region, our country, and around the world was unjust and could not continue without restraint. We wanted to make it loud, clear and unequivocal that there was another way of living in this world. “Business as usual” was not acceptable.

And so The Mid-South Peace and Justice Center continues today as we say no to the powers that be and yes to a just and peaceful planet helping to build a world where the Beloved Community can thrive!

~Janice Vanderhaar



You are the Peace and Justice Center. Thank you for supporting us.

We look forward to the next 25 years.

*Privacy continued from page 1*

Upon Barker's return, a conference was held between the commissioners and the staff. Those present on the evening of February 12 eagerly anticipated Barker's report on Option 8 in Maryland. Instead, his findings on Option 8 were scarcely mentioned. Barker had decided on other options. These included requiring parents to give "active consent" (opt-in) and the use of Option 6, which continues to give away the test scores, withholding only the student's telephone number.

A mood of surrealism filled the conference room. The district was meeting to discuss the resolution to use Option 8, and yet the very words "Option 8" were barely uttered. Instead the board members worried about putting the use the staff's recommendation for an active consent system. As one board member said: "I'm worried that some parents in low income neighborhoods may be unable to write the permission slip."

On Monday, February 19, at a school board meeting, Superintendent Johnson announced a change to the ASVAB testing policy. From now on, parents and students will be notified as to their privacy rights. Students will be allowed to opt-out of having the test results turned over to the military. Apparently the school district, fearful that some parents wouldn't be able to fill out an active consent form (opt-in) show no concern about the same fault in an opt-out system.

Despite the privacy guarantee shortcomings, we are pleased that the district will at least be warning parents and students about the ASVAB privacy risk. And allowing students who understand their rights to exercise them.

To assist the district with their parent/student notification program, we plan to picket individual schools on mornings that the ASVAB tests are to be given. We're seeking volunteers who can arrive at the school at 6:55 a.m. and hold signs and pass out literature while the students (and their parents) arrive. Anyone interested contact [george@midsouthpeace.org](mailto:george@midsouthpeace.org). We need to hear from you in order to schedule the dates.

The ASBAB testing schedule is:

Kirby	March 21 (Wednesday)
Fairlie	March 22 (Thursday)
Trezvant	March 28 (Wednesday)
Messic	March 28 (Wednesday)
Frazier	April 10 (Tuesday)

Meanwhile, AMP project is seeking to set up tables in the district high schools. To date the district has told us "no." We are seeking clarification under the equal access doctrine. If we can teach our children to fight wars, why not teach them to wage peace.

-George Grider

## Lamenting this War

*On January 1, 2007, the following remarks were made at a memorial vigil to honor the 3,000 soldiers that had died in Iraq.*

Today is a day of lamentation; a time to cry in sorrow and grief. The lives of 3,000 U.S. soldiers have been lost in an illegal, immoral, ill-advised and poorly executed "war of choice." Additionally, nearly 23,000 U.S. soldiers have been wounded. Meanwhile, we know that somewhere between 50,000 and 100,000 Iraqi civilians have been killed in this war. Today is a day of lamentation; a time to cry in sorrow and grief.

I am a Christian theologian, and when I begin to reflect upon these realities, an illegal, immoral war, and the thousands and thousands of lives destroyed by this war, it is lamentation that enters my head and my heart.

In the Bible, the book of Lamentation is a poetic wrestling with how God is addressing God's people who have lost their way. God's people have turned from living in accord with God's life-giving and liberating will and instead have indulged their own will; a death-dealing will manifest in seeking military and economic power over others. The inevitable judgment of God has come upon God's people; their sins have fallen upon them and their city and their temple have been destroyed. So in the book of Lamentation the people are moved to weep. They mourn, and they acknowledge their sin, and they repent, and they appeal to God for restoration.

Today is a day of lamentation; a time to cry in sorrow and grief. Our work here this afternoon, and into the evening,

*Please see Lamentation, next page*

*Lamentation continued.*

of reading the names of those killed in this war, of remembering each soldier through a time of sorrow in the wind and the cold, is a practice of lamentation.

In reading the names of those killed in this war, we know in our bones and in our souls that there is already a judgment that is happening to us for this war. In our names our government has killed, tortured, and denied basic human rights to prisoners, and as a result of these actions our nation is disgraced around the world.

The judgment is already happening, too, as we look around our city and see signs of the misplaced priorities of our government leaders who by and large continue to support this war—who are still unwilling to call for withdrawal, or to take the step of cutting funding for the war. We see the misplaced priorities of our government leaders when veterans of this war and previous wars show up at soup kitchens and shelters, their lives broken by the terror of war.

We see the misplaced priorities of our government leaders as this war costs some \$6-7 billion each month while over 45 million people in the United States lack health insurance, and thus lack access to basic medical care. We see the misplaced priorities of our government leaders as this war costs some \$6-7 billion each month while some 37 million people in the United States suffer below the poverty line. We see the misplaced priorities of our government leaders as this war costs some \$6-7 billion dollars each month while homeless wander our streets, and our jails bulge with lives broken by poverty, lack of jobs that pay a living wage, and lack of education.

## Four Years Too Many March and Protest to End the War in Iraq **SATURDAY • MARCH 17**



## **National Civil Rights Museum**

**450 Mulberry St. (plenty of free parking) • Rally and March**

**From Baghdad to Binghamton... From Fallujah to Frayser**

**The People Have Spoken: Support our Troops  
End the War • Bring them Home NOW!!**

**Too many – in Memphis, across this country and in Iraq – are suffering.**

**"The great initiative in this war is ours; the initiative to stop it must be ours." Dr. Martin Luther King**

**Volunteers Needed: for more info or to volunteer call 901.725.4990 or go to [www.midsouthpeace.org](http://www.midsouthpeace.org)**

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 key.” They don’t ask what happens when the man sent to prison for selling a joint gets out. What advanced crafts has he learned in our crime academies? What is his likelihood of settling down in a world that won’t allow a felon to be given an honest day’s work?

We’re now embarking on the Coalition Against Private Prisons (CAPP). This to highlight the ills of privately run jails, as well as jails in general.

And what of a media that twists the facts to support the powers that be. In the Commercial Appeal, Section B, the headline reads: “Memphis January crime down 12%.” It’s not until you get to the tenth paragraph that you learn that the murder rate during the same period is up a whopping 27.3 percent. The headlined decrease is due to the other crimes. Guess which one shows the greatest drop. Business burglary, down 28.7 percent. So we know what the police are busiest doing: protecting the businesses. That should be the headline.

We need to keep holding up the mirrors. To the crime victims, to the schools, and to the media. It may not bring down the crime for this coming summer or even the next, but we have to believe that by getting out the word, we’ll convince enough folks of the wisdom and long term practicality of what we’re doing.

~George Grider



## GrowMemphis Digs Deep

GrowMemphis is a program coordinated by the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center to create productive and educational urban community gardens. Community gardens provide fresh healthy foods for low-income areas, and empower people to develop and enhance their own communities. GrowMemphis will also allow neighborhoods to address local issues and opportunities. Together we will work together to share best garden practices, and to provide training, nutrition education, and enterprise development.

The Mid-South Peace and Justice Center has cooperated with Heifer International, a non-profit organization whose goal is to help end world hunger and poverty through self-reliance and sustainability. Our first garden was created in the Orange Mound community in 2002. Orange Mound has been the center of our efforts, while we have continued to coordinate with other Memphis and Mid-South community garden efforts throughout the Mississippi Delta.

The project consists of a two-year plan that will support three initial neighborhood gardens.

The three pilot communities are Hollywood Springdale, Parkway Gardens and Orange Mound. Our urban agriculture initiative exceeds that of the Shelby County urban agriculture program. We plan to address food security awareness, place “livestock” in our gardens (worms and chickens), and network garden efforts in a cooperative consensus-based model. One of the goals is to allow sale of the produce in local farmers’ markets, thus promoting entrepreneurial sustainability and community pride.

Members of the neighborhood and surrounding communities are invited to participate on every level of the project. These include development, training, direct gardening, community outreach, special needs (access), and vocational education. Volunteers are welcome from any age group, from early childhood to the elderly. Directors and volunteers within the program will coordinate the activities of new volunteers and will provide the necessary training and assistance to make the time spent rewarding and productive.

We are all looking forward to a wonderful season of self growth and growth of our communities. Please join us in this movement turning vacant lots into thriving centers of community!

~Jessica Sumner



*Lamentation continued from page 5.*

The judgment is already happening. Our lives together, our city is being destroyed. Today is a day of lamentation; a time to cry in sorrow and grief. Lamentation requires truth-telling. Lamentation requires looking at ourselves, looking at our nation and facing the hard realities we have created through our apathy, our selfishness, our neglect of the common good. Lamentation requires that we see this war for what it is—a deadly symptom of the underlying illness in our society.

None of us can stand here tonight with any sense of self-righteousness, any sense of separation from the evil of this war. As good American individualists we may try to deny responsibility for the 3,000 dead U.S. soldiers, the 23,000 wounded U.S. soldiers, the 50-100,000 Iraqi dead. We may try to deny responsibility for the death in our society and around the world that comes from spending billions each month on this war. But that denial is a lie. Lamentation requires that we tell the truth and take responsibility for this war and its costs. We take responsibility, not to wallow in guilt, but to move to repentance—to turn from our apathy and selfishness—and to turn toward continuing resistance.

Today is a day of lamentation; a time to cry in sorrow and grief. And in our sorrow and grief let us tell each other the truth, that there is more that we must do to resist this war. Let us tell each other the truth: that our sorrow and our grief must move us to oppose this war through every means available to us as persons committed to peace. Let us remember the dead, let us lament, and let us cry in sorrow and grief, and let us continue to support each other and to struggle together for life, for justice, for peace.

~Pete Gathje

local voices and sources of information due to commercial and political concerns. The aim of Peace and Justice Radio is to first inform and then train citizen journalists who will cover the issues that affect this community and to do so with a depth and diversity that commercial media outlets are unable and unwilling to do.

Professional journalists are trained to cover single events and crisis, but the development of in-depth coverage of critical issues is lacking. Peace & Justice Radio will cover events as they happen over time with an emphasis on following the issue beyond any single event, and providing a historical approach to better inform the community of resources otherwise ignored by the commercial press. Initial content will focus on issue areas vital to our community's survival, issues that ordinarily receive little coverage: local environment (air quality, alternative power and fuels); local governance (local tax issues, how the departments of local government function); social justice (living wages, privatization and election reform); and upcoming community events.

Peace & Justice Radio will air on FM 91.7 WUMR at 11:30 am on Tuesdays. Radio Free Nashville has committed to giving Peace & Justice Radio an hour every week to broadcast in central Tennessee. The half-hour show will be culled from a weekly podcast available on our new community media site, [www.midsouthpeacemedia.org](http://www.midsouthpeacemedia.org). This community news site will also feature audio, video and print content from our community. We have also applied for a full hour on WEVL Memphis Community Radio. Each show will feature a brief review of local news, a listing of local progressive events, and a segment format with different community organizations producing their own features. Segments will include those working with environmental justice, veteran's affairs and public health issues just to name a few areas. If you would like to become involved please contact me at [chad@midsouthpeace.org](mailto:chad@midsouthpeace.org).

~Chad Johnson

*Living Wage continued from back page.*

The Rev. Andre Johnson, pastor of Gifts of Life Ministries, presented the celebratory sermon at the worship service. A reception followed with plenty of smiles all around after the three years of organizing. Everyone gave the lead organizer Rev. Rebekah Jordan of the Midsouth Interfaith Alliance for Economic Justice special thanks for her hard work.

The Living Wage movement now moves on. The Shelby County Commission will now take up the Living Wage issue for its contractors and County government workers. The County Commission has formed an ad hoc Living Wage Committee. The draft ordinance needs improvements. Some Commissioners are voicing concerns about whether the County should have a living wage ordinance at all. Your emails and letters now will be very important in determining whether the Commission moves forward and what shape the ordinance takes. To connect to your county commissioner, go to the Midsouth Interfaith Network's website: <http://midsouthinterfaith.org/>

~Allan Lummus

## Living Wage is now City law. County draft ordinance needs our support

On February 8th, 2007 at members of the Memphis Living Wage Coalition gathered at Gifts of Life Ministries Church on Jackson Avenue in Midtown Memphis to celebrate the recent passage of the Memphis Living Wage ordinance. Volunteers gathered to celebrate the victory. Both the City of Memphis and the City schools have now agreed to pay all their employees a living wage.

Mike Scoggins of Ironworkers Local 167 presented a plaque to City Council members Joe Brown, Myron Lowery, Barbara Swearingen Holt, and Dedrick Brittenum. Deborah Clubb of the Memphis Area Women's Council congratulated School Board members Tomeka Hart, Patrice Robinson, and Sharon Webb, and Memphis Education Association leaders Stephanie Fitzgerald, Mildred Coburn, and Susanne Jackson on their Living Wage contract for educational support professionals.

The Memphis Living Wage Coalition Steering Committee was made of up Happy Jones and Deborah Clubb of Memphis Area Women's Council, Virginia Strickland of Steelworkers Local 7655, Mike Scoggins and Greg Crouse of Ironworkers Local 167, Earline Duncan of Church Women United, Jacob Flowers & Allan Lummus of the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, and Teri Craven of UFCW Local 1529.

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## 2007 Board of Directors

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**Peace & Justice**

Mid-South Peace & Justice Center  
...committed to developing communities of peace, social justice and human rights through education and nonviolent action.  
[www.midsouthpeace.org](http://www.midsouthpeace.org)

## CALENDAR

[midsouthpeace.org](http://midsouthpeace.org)

- March 17 • March to End the War in Iraq  
12noon • National Civil Rights Museum
- March 24 • Progressive Media Meeting  
12noon • Peace and Justice Center
- March 29 • Vanderhaar Symposium  
7pm • Christian Brothers Univ.
- April 5 • Peace Committee Meeting  
7pm • Peace and Justice Center
- April 11 • Community Potluck  
6:30pm • Peace and Justice Center

Check the Calendar at [www.midsouthpeace.org](http://www.midsouthpeace.org) for updated information on Counter Recruitment leafleting and Grow Memphis groundbreakings.

## Weekly Events

- Wednesdays • Peace Vigil  
7:30- 8am • Central and E. Pkwy
  - Saturdays • Food not Bombs  
11am • Galloway Church
- Unless otherwise noted, all events are at the Peace and Justice Center, 1000 S. Cooper.

## New T-Shirts for Sale

Contact us for purchase



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Mid-South Peace & Justice Center

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